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Honorary Degree Citation: Bill Kurtis

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Granted 1998

BILL KURTIS

You have been earning the respect of viewers and colleagues in television journalism for 30 years. You also won scores of awards for excellence in journalism. Your career has touched every facet of a profession that has grown into the most influential medium of our time.

Television won you over in the early 1960s. A native Kansan, you had been reporting for a local station but decided to accept a position at a Wichita law firm. Then, a tornado ripped through the state capital. You were able to deliver an instant, on-air warning that saved lives. Your career decision was made; TV it would be.

You went directly to Chicago, where you reported the tumultuous events of the late 1960s and developed your journalistic skills. By 1973, you became co-anchor at WBBM-TV. Beginning in 1975, you went to Vietnam two weeks before the fall of Saigon. The first local "foreign correspondent," you took your reporting skills to the world's hot spots. Founder of the "Focus" investigative reporting unit, you examined critical issues, including veterans' exposure to Agent Orange.

In 1982, CBS Network News asked you to anchor the "CBS Morning News" from New York. There, over a three-and-half-year period, you completed a series of hour-long documentaries for "CBS Reports," exploring subjects as diverse as organ transplants and airline safety. Your book, *Bill Kurtis on Assignment*, features accounts of your international reporting, accompanied by more than 100 of your photographs.

Returning to Chicago in 1985, you took long-form reporting into new areas, creating a singular presence on cable television as one of America's most prolific documentarians. You are the executive producer and host of three award-winning weekly prime time series: "The New Explorers with Bill Kurtis," "Investigative Reports," and "American Justice."

For your dedication to excellence in informing and educating the public, for bringing innovation, curiosity, and genuine concern to programs that benefit young people, Governors State University is honored to confer upon you at this year's commencement an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree.